

What Are You Sending Ahead?

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John Wesley once visited the estate of one of the wealthiest land owners of his time. They rode around the property for hours. The land owner finally asked, "What do you think?" Wesley replied, "You are going to have a hard time leaving all of this."

We are pilgrims passing through this world. We cannot take anything with us when we go. We can however send eternal investments on ahead. Randy Alcorn calls it the "Treasure Principle." He uses the analogy of foreign businessmen that come to countries and stay for three months to work on a project. Living in a hotel room they are told they cannot carry anything back with them on the plane when their work is completed. They can send anything they earn by depositing it in the bank account in advance of their return. So what will they do? Purchase luxurious furniture and electronic equipment for the hotel room? I don't think so. They make an investment in their future.

The Bible speaks of sending our hearts and treasures ahead of us (Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:7). Mark it down: there is no way to separate the heart and its treasures. We send our treasures in advance. Our hearts soon follow. What is your treasure? Where is your heart? You will find them both in the same location. No wonder Alcorn says, "Anything we try to hang on to here will be lost: but anything we put in God's hands will become eternal treasure."

There is no greater investment than reaching lost souls. The investment quickly multiplies as they share the apostolic truth with their family and friends. Our frontline missionaries give all; risk all to make eternal investments in the many fields of the world. Our pastors and churches recognize their heart and unite with them to plow, plant, and produce the crop in each location. The harvest is our investment. It is our treasure. Kingdom investments reap kingdom dividends. Uncountable souls reached on earth equals stored treasure in heaven forever.

Let me give you one example: Three generations of Burtons have served or continue to serve of Venezuelan soil. Brother James Burton sensed the call to distant South America when he was sixteen years of age. Brother and Sister Burton were appointed as foreign missionaries in 1961. A year later they boarded a boat, and headed for Venezuela, never once looking back, always faithful to the call. Upon arrival to their new ministerial home they met three small churches and one preaching point. Today, we can count over 200,000 constituents, over 1,300 churches and preaching points, and over 1,000 active ministers of the gospel. In 2007 we celebrated fifty years of the UPC reaching and winning lost souls in Venezuela. Each year it is becoming more difficult to find facilities to host the national conference with attendance over 20,000. Regional Director, Darry Crossley once reported, "It was an amazing sight—the floor of the arena packed with standing crowds for over three hours! The crowds in the bleachers had to be told to quit jumping for fear the whole structure would collapse!"

Twenty-seven years after Brother Burton's arrival in Venezuela the government took special notice of his faithfulness to their nation. A declaration was made and the President presented him with a beautiful silver medal, the second highest award given for outstanding achievement. Of special note, no Protestant missionary had ever been honored for laboring among the Venezuelans. The honor received dims in comparison to the joy experienced in seeing multiplied thousands of Venezuelans in heaven. Today, the church there heads the list of evangelical churches. What ever happened? Heart and treasure were united. Men and women opted to invest in a field, gave it their all, and we are still reaping the results. This is not merely an isolated story. It can be told over and over again, missionary after missionary, and field after field.

We give and go because there is a big harvest; a gigantic need. Someone is born every 4.1 seconds. That translates to 15,000 people per hour; 354,000 per day; 10,782,000 per month; and 129,384,000 each year. The field is the world. Investment opportunities abound. There can be no quitting now. General Patton once said, "I don't want to receive any message saying we are holding our position. We are advancing constantly. We're not interested in holding anything except the enemy."

Join our missionaries as they relentlessly labor to fulfill what was written about one man that went to some islands of the South Pacific. When the missionary died, this was placed on his grave:

When he came here,
There were no Christians.
When he went away,
There were no heathen.

The question doesn't come down to, what are you leaving behind? It is, what are you sending ahead?